



Sedgwick County

SUICIDE PREVENTION TASK FORCE

**For Immediate Release
May 3, 2002**

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Suicide Prevention: Opportunities and Challenges along the Continuum of Health and Illness

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – Suicide Prevention Week is an annual public health campaign sponsored by the American Association of Suicidology. This year's theme is *Suicide Prevention: "Opportunities and Challenges Along the Continuum of Health and Illness*, with additional material on a Sub-Theme "Suicide Risk Among the Developmentally Disabled." Suicide Prevention Week will be observed May 5 -11, 2002.

Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States, with an average of one suicide occurring every 18 minutes. The elderly make up 12% of the national population, but committed 18.7% of the suicides. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15- to 24-year-olds, and Kansas ranks 29th in the nation for its suicide rate. During 2001, there were 53 suicides in Sedgwick County.

775,000 Americans attempt suicide each year. An estimated 4.4 million Americans are the friend, family member or loved one of a suicide victim. Studies have found that 70% of suicides occur as a result of having a major depressive episode, a disorder that has an excellent response to treatment. Suicide is most often a tragic, permanent outcome to an imminently treatable illness.

"Suicide is significantly related to diagnosable and treatable mental disorders," says Kevin Bomhoff, Chair of the Sedgwick County Suicide Prevention Task Force. "Our hope this year," states Bomhoff, "is to increase public awareness of the warning signs and risk factors associated with suicide, as well as educating residents about the number of important resources that are available to them, right here in Sedgwick County consequently increasing preventive activity and behavior."

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"Sedgwick County - Strengthening Lifelines"

Be Aware of Warning Signs:

- Withdraws from friends and or social activities
- Recent severe loss or threat of a significant loss
- Drastic change in behavior
- Loss of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- Gives away prized possessions
- Takes unnecessary risks; reckless and or impulsive
- Lost interest in their personal appearance
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Expresses a sense of hopelessness

Ways to be helpful to someone who is threatening suicide:

- Be aware. Learn the warning signs.
- Get involved. Become available. Show interest and support.
- Ask if he/she is thinking about suicide.
- Be direct. Talk openly and freely about suicide.
- Be willing to listen. Allow for expressions of feelings. Accept the feelings.
- Be non-judgmental. Do not debate whether suicide is right or wrong. Do not lecture on the value of life.
- Do not be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
- Offer hope that alternatives are available. Do not offer glib reassurance; it only proves you don't understand.
- Take action! Remove means!

“Sedgwick County understands how important suicide prevention activities are,” says Commission Chairman Ben Sciortino. “The Sedgwick County Suicide Prevention Task Force continues to work in the community to provide assistance to those in need.”

If you or someone you know is talking about suicide, call the Sedgwick County Suicide Prevention Services, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week at 263-3770.

Be Aware, Be Alert and Be Involved.

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